

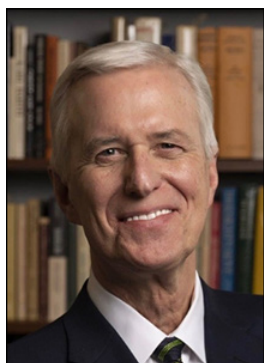
ATS receives Lilly Endowment Inc. grant for theological book project

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has received a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish its Theologies for Pastoral Ministry project, which aims to create a book series on practical theological wisdom.

Theologies for Pastoral Ministry is being led by Craig Barnes, president emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary, on behalf of ATS, and it seeks to address the current social changes being faced by pastors and the congregations they serve. The grant, which covers the first of the project's three phases, started on January 1, 2024, and will conclude by June 30, 2025. The projected completion date is December 2028.

"I am excited as we launch into this important project, which will make a significant contribution to the church, its theological schools, and most of all to thoughtful pastors in search of a theological north star for guiding their congregations through the turbulent changes of contemporary life," Barnes said.



Craig Barnes

Under Barnes' direction, the project will develop ten books focused on offering practical theological wisdom for pastoral ministry today. The books will arise from a series of five in-person gatherings of working pastors, (totaling about 60 people) representing



the church's diversity of traditions, race, generations, genders, and socio-economic settings. The gatherings will focus on the pressing questions of pastoral identity and mission, and participants will develop theological affirmations about the contemporary calling of the clergy.

Issues the book series will address include:

- ◆ the social polarization that has divided congregations and the increasingly uncompromising positions of each side,
- ◆ the pandemic and the ongoing need to maintain virtual worship and other forms of ministry,
- ◆ the declining denominations that force pastors to reach out broadly and invite new congregants, which has led to complex questions about maintaining theological traditions,
- ◆ the significant financial pressures that make it hard for many congregations to pay pastors and maintain aging buildings, and

- ♦ the new theologies of ministry from churches of color.

“This is a timely project that will gather wisdom from leaders in the trenches during this time of significant change in communities of faith,” said ATS Executive Director Frank Yamada. “The books that will emerge from this series will inform a generation of pastors who have already navigated the major disruptions of social change, living, and leading through a global pandemic, and the reorienting of pastoral leadership toward the needs of the church at this moment of the 21st century.”

Barnes, who recently retired from Princeton Theological Seminary after ten years as president and professor of

pastoral leadership, previously worked as chaired professor of pastoral leadership at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for ten years and served in pastoral ministry for 40 years. He is the author of nine books and will also serve as general editor for the *Theologies for Pastoral Ministry* series, in addition to authoring one of the books.

“The theologies we develop for the church and its pastors will rise from the ground up, beginning with a careful process of listening to diverse gatherings of clergy and scholars,” said Barnes, adding, “I am grateful to ATS and Lilly Endowment Inc. for their vision and devotion to offering relevant theology for the work of pastoral ministry in the current day.”



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